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ABSTRACT

For about three years, Lane Community College has made 15 one-page "Study Tips" available to students for free. Designed for students who would not be likely to read a booklet on study methods or attend a full course, the "Study Tips" are displayed in the Counseling Department, Study Skills Center, and Multi-Cultural Center and are distributed by counselors, assessment personnel, and several instructors. Between 2000 to 3000 copies of the "Study Tips" are distributed each year. The "Study Tips" series is appended to this brief discussion of their format and use. Titles are: (1) "How to Use Some Facts about Your Brain in Order to Study Better"; (2) "Memory Tricks Can Make School Work Easier"; (3) "How to Use Categories and Have a Better Memory"; (4) "How to Learn Skills Faster"; (5) "Emergency Studying"; (6) "How to Create a Positive Mental Attitude and Learn More When You Study"; (7) "How to Relax So You Can Study Better"; (8) "How to Teach Yourself New Things: The MISTARS Method"; (9) "What Most Instructors Expect Their Students to Do"; (10) "What to Do When You Don't Understand What You Are Reading"; (11) "How to Take Objective Tests to Get the Highest Score Possible"; (12) "Personal Failure, Worry, and Self-Acceptance"; (13) "How to Plan Your Time So That You Can Get Your Homework Done"; (14) "How Students Succeed in College--Despite Having Reading Skills That Are Below Average"; and (15) "What is Intelligence? How You Can Raise Your Own Intelligence." (KL)

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A SERIES OF 15 FREE ONE-PAGE TIPS HELPS STUDENTS STUDY BETTER

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August 1982

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ABSTRACT

Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, makes available to students 15 one-page study tips. They are intended to reach students who do not buy "how to study" books and who do not take courses in effective learning methods. Locally written, they contain information compiled from local wisdom and from books on memory, relaxation, test-taking strategies, reasoning skills, and psychology of learning. Extremely cheap to produce and distribute, they only need to help a few students persist an extra term in order to repay their cost. Topics include: study methods, memory methods, relaxing, overcoming dislike of studying, coping with anxiety, test-taking methods, advice for poor readers, and teachers' expectations for student behaviors. The complete set of 15 Study Tips is appended to the article.

A SERIES OF 15 FREE ONE-PAGE STUDY TIPS HELPS STUDENTS STUDY BETTER

by Daniel L. Hodges, Ph. D.,
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It has long been known that many college students do not know how to study effectively, and colleges have tried to offer various aids to students. However, the usual aids of offering courses in effective learning methods and selling books of study techniques fail to reach the great majority of students. Only a fraction of most college's students take courses in study methods, and even fewer buy the available books on studying.

Students who do not know how to study effectively are more likely to get poor grades, and their poor grades may encourage them to drop out. Research on college attrition reveals that a prime reason why students drop out of college is due to their poor grades and to their looking ahead to the future and anticipating continued lack of success. Consequently, if a college can influence increasing numbers of students to learn how to study effectively, it can increase student persistence in college.

For about 3 years Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, has offered free for students 15 one-page Study Tips, some with one side of advice, some with two sides. Lane has an annual FTE of approximately 9000 students. They take 2000 to 3000 copies of each of the Study Tips annually. The cost runs under $1000 annually. And if 6 or 7 students learn a skill that leads them to stay as little as one term longer than they would have done without that skill, then the college has recouped its investment in the Study Tips.

I want to explain why we use the one-page format. Our reasoning starts with the observation that many people will read something that is short and easy. Hence, we expected that they would read a few one-page Study Tips, but they would be less likely to read a booklet or a full book on study methods. Similarly, many students would not be likely to take a full course, but would be willing to read some short pages of advice. That is why we have used the format of self-contained one-page sheets.

We are aware that the brief presentation of the information has disadvantages. Many students probably read them once, promptly forget the contents, and are unaffected by them. We are hoping, however, that their advantages outwweigh their disadvantages.

Here are some of the uses to which they have been put.

1. Counselors often suggest that students take one or more of them on topics where the students need help. Since they are available on a display rack in the Counseling Department, the students can readily get them.

2. When incoming students get low scores on their reading test, we often refer them to the study tips on "How Students Succeed in College--Despite Having Reading Skills That are Below Average" and "What To Do When You Don't Understand What You Are

Reading."

3. Our Study Skills Center and Multi-Cultural Center both have display racks of Study Tips. And instructors in several departments hand out sets of them to their students early in the term.

I composed them over a period of several months. Although the task took some effort, most colleges have staff members who teach effective learning courses or applied psychology who have the necessary skills to write their own. My method was to read several books and articles on study methods and the various other topics, take notes, translate the knowledge into simply stated principles and practical suggestions, and add some examples. Then I wrote and rewrote and rewrote.

As I write more of them, I will probably add material on using organization to enhance memory, the encoding specificity phenomenon in memory, other memory techniques, note-taking systems, coping with test anxiety and perhaps others.

A list of the titles (and an occasional descriptive comment) follows.

1. HOW TO USE SOME FACTS ABOUT YOUR BRAIN IN ORDER TO STUDY BETTER. (Findings on short-term memory, recitation, and associating answers to questions.)
2. MEMORY TRICKS CAN MAKE SCHOOL WORK EASIER.
3. HOW TO USE CATEGORIES AND HAVE A BETTER MEMORY.
4. HOW TO LEARN SKILLS FASTER.
5. EMERGENCY STUDYING. (How to study when you don't have enough time to study properly.)
6. HOW TO CREATE A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE AND LEARN MORE WHEN YOU STUDY. HOW TO FIGHT YOUR DISLIKE OF STUDYING (on the back of #6.)
7. HOW TO RELAX SO YOU CAN STUDY BETTER.
8. HOW TO TEACH YOURSELF NEW THINGS: THE "MISTARS" METHOD.
9. WHAT MOST INSTRUCTORS EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO DO. (Student role behavior or "studenting".)
10. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING.
11. HOW TO TAKE OBJECTIVE TESTS TO GET THE HIGHEST SCORE POSSIBLE.
12. PERSONAL FAILURE, WORRY, AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE. (An attempt to help students cope with the normal "failures", anxiety, and trouble that the process of learning often leads to.)
13. HOW TO PLAN YOUR TIME SO THAT YOU CAN GET YOUR HOMEWORK DONE.
14. HOW STUDENTS SUCCEED IN COLLEGE--DESPITE HAVING READING SKILLS THAT ARE BELOW AVERAGE.
15. WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE? HOW CAN YOU RAISE YOUR OWN INTELLIGENCE?

HOW TO USE SOME FACTS ABOUT YOUR BRAIN IN ORDER TO STUDY BETTER

PRINCIPLE: If you read a new bit of information, your brain will remember it almost perfectly for about 15 seconds. Then you will forget it fairly rapidly.

PRINCIPLE: If you say a fact to yourself over and over again, you will put it into your memory very firmly. (This is not the same as re-reading it; this is saying it or writing it.)

PRINCIPLE: If you ask yourself a question to which the new bit of information is the right answer, and then say the new fact to yourself as the answer, you will remember well. This works better than merely repeating the answer without repeating the question, too.

HOW TO USE THESE PRINCIPLES WHEN YOU STUDY

1. You should deliberately look for things you want to remember for an exam or for personal use.
2. When you find such a fact or idea, read it carefully so that you understand it.
3. Then stop reading, and before 15 seconds has passed, do the next four steps, (Numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7).
4. Look away from your book.
5. Ask yourself the logical question to which the fact or idea is the right answer.
6. Say the answer to yourself. (Or write it down.)
7. Look back to the book to check if you got the idea or fact correct.
8. Repeat steps 4 through 7 until you get the fact right two or three times in a row.
9. When you have to learn several facts in a row or a list of things, you should only learn one or two at a time. Don't overload!
10. Finally, mark your book so that later you can find the same place fast.
11. Review the new fact later. About 24 hours later is a good time. Also review before exams.

WARNING: It will seem so easy to recite the answers to your questions that you will falsely think you are not learning anything. You will think you do not need to recite. But it works!

IF YOU LIKE THIS METHOD, WHY NOT USE THE METHOD RIGHT NOW IN ORDER TO REMEMBER THE IMPORTANT STEPS. DO ONE AT A TIME.

January 1980 L.C.C. Testing Office

MEMORY TRICKS CAN MAKE SCHOOL WORK EASIER

PRINCIPLE: "You can remember any new piece of information if it is associated to something you already know or remember."*

PRINCIPLE: "In order to remember any piece of information, it must be associated to something you already know or remember in some ridiculous way."

HOW TO USE THESE BASIC PRINCIPLES

A. Find something similar or opposite to the new information to link it to. It can be something about the letters in the words or something in real life. Make yourself stop and think about that relationship.

1. "Mrs. Harris goes to Paris." The rhyme makes the words similar.
2. "The capital city of the state of Maine is Augusta." You can stop to think that cold wintry Maine has a capital suggesting hot summer in August. These are opposites.
3. You could spell "piece" by thinking a "a piece of pie." Two similar spellings.

B. Here is a way to learn lists with several items in them: Link them, two at a time, into ridiculous mental pictures, each chained to the next.

1. Suppose you needed to memorize this list: rabbits, Australia, desk, shoe, and toothbrush.
   You might start imagining hundreds of rabbits running over a map and jumping into the diagram of Australia. Then imagine a gigantic office desk rising up, pushing Australia out of the sea. Then think of the four desk legs wearing shoes. Then imagine the shoes holding toothbrushes in their laces and busily brushing some teeth.
2. Make your own associations.
3. You DON'T want sensible associations, but you do want ridiculous and wild and exaggerated associations.
4. It is easy to remember these vivid mental pictures and to learn long lists. Try it! You'll see that it works.

C. Here are guidelines to making ridiculous associations:

1. Substitute one item for part of another. In linking fertilizer to petroleum, picture a gas can pouring out powdered fertilizer as a substitute for gas.
2. Make things out of proportion. Link "memory" to this "link" method by imagining a person with a gigantic brain wrapped around with hundreds of feet of chain links.
3. Exaggerate the numbers involved or the sizes involved. Link lemons to Vitamin C by seeing a lemon, cut open, with vast seas (C's) inside it with thousands of letter C's swimming in them.
4. Put action in your associations. You can learn that saltwater is a cure for heat exhaustion by picturing yourself pouring a waterfall of saltwater over a prone person and the person stands up healthy.

* Many of these ideas come from The Memory Book by Harry Lorayne and Jerry Lucas. New York: Stein & Day. 1974. Also a Ballantine paperback.

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HOW TO USE CATEGORIES AND HAVE A BETTER MEMORY

PRINCIPLE: If a person can organize new knowledge in terms of familiar categories, the person is likely to remember it.

PRINCIPLE: If a person has some categories in mind when she/he starts to read or to listen, then the person is likely to notice things that fit into these categories and to remember them.

HOW TO USE THESE PRINCIPLES:

The first principle suggests that after you have read a book or heard a lecture, you can remember it better by organizing in terms of important categories.

The second principle suggests that you try to have some categories in mind as you start to read or listen.

EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIES TO USE:

Literature classes often suggest you look for characters, plot, conflict, symbols, and moral principles being explored. These are all categories.

In math the rules of doing problems are categories.

In science the various forces, types of chemicals, and formulas are categories.

Each subject matter has its own distinct categories. They are all somewhat different. Try to figure them out. When you do, you will improve your memory.

There are also some important general categories that apply to many subjects. Here are their names and some examples of them.

1. CONCEPTS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS:
   Example: An automobile (concept) is a small land vehicle designed for passenger transportation, usually powered by an internal combustion engine (the definition).

2. AN OBJECT AND ITS PARTS OR AN EVENT AND ITS PARTS:
   Example: A table (object) has a horizontal solid top (part) and four legs (parts).

   When he shaved (event), he wet his face (part), put lather on it (part), shaved (part), rinsed (part), and dried his face (part).

3. AN OBJECT AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS OR AN EVENT AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS
   Example: A baseball (object) is round, smallish, white with red thread, and not too heavy (characteristics).

   A parade (event) is colorful, noisy, and exciting to little children (characteristics).

4. CAUSES AND EFFECTS
   Example: When Billy hit Johnny on the nose (cause), Johnny's nose bled (effect).

   If the number of lions increases (cause), the number of antelopes and zebras tends to decrease (effect).

HOW TO LEARN SKILLS FASTER

What are we talking about? We are talking about people who weld metal parts together, people who play pianos, people who measure wood and saw it, people who clean teeth, and even people who write effective essays.

All these people DO SOMETHING that ends up with a certain desired RESULT (a good weld, beautiful music, well-shaped lumber and so on). These activities are skills. Learning skills is somewhat different than learning concepts, ideas, facts, and information.

A. MATCH FEEDBACK TO AN IDEAL

1. Always study your feedback. After you have tried to do your new activity skillfully, stop and observe what actually happened (the feedback). Look at your brush stroke, listen to your musical notes, look at the hole you drilled and so on.

2. Compare your feedback to the ideal. Check to see how close your results came to matching what the results should be (the ideal). If you do not know how good your results are, ask your teacher. Teachers are extremely important because they know how to do the skill and they also know what the desired results should be.

3. Do it again soon. Each time you try, notice if your feedback is getting closer to or further from the ideal. Try again. You can learn fastest if you try to correct your action while you remember (1) how you did it last time and (2) what the results were. Try to avoid long delays between your first action and your second action.

B. PRACTICE SMALL UNITS OF THE ACTION SEPARATELY. If your skill can be broken up into small units of action, practice the small units separately. For example, a person learning to play a song on a piano could play one phrase in the song several times, then play another, and so on. The person does not have to play the whole piece through each time. The same advice applies to other skills, too.

C. DO SLOW PRACTICE. Give yourself some periods of slow practice. If you do your new skill extremely slowly, you will increase your ability to concentrate and to correct errors before they happen. Don't do slow practice all the time. Do some practice at normal speeds.

D. DO MENTAL PRACTICE. Did you know that you can actually increase your skill by thinking about it? You should mentally practice your new skill while sitting quietly, waiting to fall asleep, driving your car. You imagine every move your muscles make and you imagine that you are getting good feedback which matches the ideal results. If you don't believe it works, ask pilots or skiers if they haven't flown their plane or ridden their skis for miles and miles in the privacy of their minds!

WARNING: Don't do this unless you know clearly what the proper moves are. You may imagine wrong actions and teach yourself to do a mistake. Example: A typist who hasn't yet memorized the typewriter keyboard may mentally practice a mistake and make it worse.

E. LISTEN TO AN EXPERT OR A TEACHER. Try to get honest praise and criticism from an expert. Try to accept it honestly and try to follow the advice.

F. GIVE YOURSELF PRAISE AND CRITICISM. Praise yourself when you do well. If you are a beginner, praise even the simplest successes. Why? It'll make you feel good and encourage you.

When you make a mistake or do poorly, admit it honestly, but don't criticize yourself too severely. Why not? Because it will make you tense, discourage you, slow down your learning, and make you want to avoid practice.

EMERGENCY STUDYING

This page describes some ways to study when you definitely do not have enough time to study some material thoroughly enough before a test.

I. WHAT NOT TO DO

You will be afraid the teacher will ask about a topic you haven't read. So you will be tempted to read everything you haven't read yet and tempted to read it fast. DON'T!

Why Not? Because if you read a large quantity of knowledge too fast, it will lead to a very poor memory for it. You would waste your time.

II. WHAT TO DO

1. Try to emotionally accept the fact that you cannot study everything. Try to fully let yourself give up the goal of perfect reviewing. You must make hard choices. Accept that!
2. Relax -- as best as you can. You will remember more when relaxed. So breathe deeply for two minutes and think your best calming thoughts.
3. Start by thinking of your teacher and what type of knowledge and skills he or she stresses most. Definitions? Principles? Facts? Solving problems? Something else? Get those things as clear in your head as you can.
4. Go looking for the important knowledge in your books and notes. Skip less important information. You will have to scan the pages to find what you want. Use every possible clue: chapter sub-headings, boldface type, summaries, etc.
5. When you find a desired bit of knowledge, do this:
   a. Read that part and read enough of the nearby lines to understand it. Be slow and thorough. Give yourself time to understand it.
   b. After you understand it, try to memorize it this way.
      1. Read the line.
      2. Look away.
      3. Ask yourself a question that the information is an answer for.
      4. Say the information to yourself.
      5. Look back at the book to check if you were right.
      6. Do it again until you get it right twice.
      7. Mark the place so you can review it later if you have time.
6. Continue scanning the pages and hunt for more information.
7. Try to study some important things from every chapter that the teacher assigned. Why? Because teachers usually try to balance their questions among all the parts of the assignment.
8. If you face an essay test rather than an objective test, you must usually memorize your knowledge more completely. There won't be any clues available for you.
9. The final bit of advice: Study in advance next time and you won't need emergency studying.

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HOW TO CREATE A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE AND LEARN MORE WHEN YOU STUDY

1. REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU FREELY CHOSE TO TAKE COLLEGE COURSES. If you have freely chosen to take your courses and to do your studying, you will like your work better. So when you begin to hate the authority of your teachers, sit down and remind yourself that YOU personally chose to take your courses and that YOU freely want to do your work. Also you can tell yourself that YOU freely choose to accept the authority of your teachers. What happens to you if you keep thinking "The teachers are forcing me to do this homework?" You'll hate it and try to evade doing it.

2. THINK BEFORE YOU READ. What should you think?

   a. You should think about your intentions and your purposes for reading.

      Most often you will want to (1) find the important information, (2) understand the information, (3) remember it, and (4) mentally relate it to other information. You should deliberately tell yourself you want to do this. It will sharpen your brain to do it. What happens if you don't? Well, imagine! Suppose you say to yourself, "I've got to get this assignment done. I hope I can get it done by 9:00 p.m. in time for my favorite T.V. show." You are likely to read it fast and passively. You are likely to "get it done", but to do no more. So try to set your purposes to accomplish what you really want.

   b. Think about the questions you will answer by reading this material.

      Quickly survey the chapter, if necessary. If it's about the cause of something, ask yourself, "What are the causes of X?" If it's about a description of the characteristics of something, then ask yourself, "I wonder what the characteristics of X are?"

3. TRY TO SET CONDITIONS SO YOU CAN CONCENTRATE.

   a. It is true. Noises, lights, people moving, visitors, and interruptions can lower your study efficiency. Try to eliminate them if you can.

   b. If you cannot escape distractions, here's how to fight them. Spend more time than usual in thinking before you study. Try to arouse an eager desire to learn. Make your desire strong. Then go to it.

   c. Your own worries and your daydreams about your wants can also distract you. How do you fight that? Basically, you talk to your worries and daydreams as if they were people and promise them that if they let you study until a set time, you will give them some time. Then study. Afterwards, keep your promise and do your worrying or your passionate daydreaming! It sounds crazy, but it works.

4. TRY TO WARM UP YOUR MIND BEFORE YOU STUDY. People warm up their cars; athletes warm up their muscles before games. How do you warm up your mind?

   a. If you think before you read as I described in item #2 above, that will help you warm up.

   b. Also if you review a little past work in the same subject, it will help. Read or scan a few pages of past chapters or class notes. If it's math, do an easy problem or two. Notice the key ideas of your subject. That'll get you ready to study new material. Even two or three minutes review will help greatly.

5. GIVE YOURSELF A MENTAL REST EVERY NOW AND THEN. People do get tired of studying. How do you tell when your mind is tired? When it's harder to concentrate and when new material seems more confusing. So rest. Do something quite different. Avoid massive long periods of continual studying unless you know you can keep concentrating all the time.

OVER →

HOW TO FIGHT YOUR DISLIKE OF STUDYING

The Problem

Most people have a love-and-hate relationship with school and learning and studying. They can't seem to stop themselves from cutting classes, postponing their homework, doing a sloppy job in their work, and half-heartedly preparing for exams. And yet they truly want to learn and to get ahead.

It is true: We are our own worst enemies. If we let our bad attitudes and sloppy work habits win over us, we will never be good students, get jobs we like, earn high pay, and have a healthy self-respect.

How can we fight our bad attitudes and habits?

1. Cause of Problem: Psychologists have found that the negative attitudes will almost never go away. Daily events keep reviving them: tiredness, temptations to do other things, thinking about work and hating it, fearing failure, and so on.

   Solution: Stay alert. Be prepared to have to win the battle each new day. Don't relax. Don't follow your negative tendencies too much. They will destroy your chances of success.

2. Cause of Problem: Social psychologists have found that for most people if someone forces them to do something, they will dislike that activity and will try to escape doing it. So if you feel and believe that someone, not yourself, is forcing you to do schoolwork, you will tend to hate it, resent it, avoid it, and resist working hard. Naturally, if you are fighting your school work, you will get lower grades.

   Solution: If you freely choose to do your work in school, you will tend to like it and to want to work harder. So sit down and think and decide for yourself. Do you of your own free will choose to go to college? Do you choose your program? Do you choose to do the work necessary to succeed? Do you choose to accept the authority of your teachers? What is your answer to these questions? Choose. CHOOSE. YOU CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF!

   If you decide that you choose for school, then remember it.

   When your dark doubts sing their dirty songs in your head and try to get you to avoid your homework, then is the time to remember and to tell yourself, "I chose this course and this work and all that goes with it. And I still choose it!"

3. Cause of Problem: If people do things without having clear goals and purposes for doing those things, they tend to feel their activities are meaningless and they dislike them. So if you don't have any clear goals or interests concerning why you are going to college, your courses will seem meaningless and irrelevant to you and you won't tend to try hard.

   Solution: Try to develop some long term goals, some purposes, some personal objectives for yourself. They can be general (helping people) or specific (choosing the occupation you want to go into). Most colleges have trained counselors who can help you greatly in formulating your own goals. See one. You'll be pleasantly surprised how much it will motivate you once you decide what you want out of life.

4. Cause of Problem: When people believe they are likely to fail at an activity, they tend to avoid it, to not try very hard, and to say things like, "Oh, well, I didn't really want to succeed anyway." If you believe you are probably going to fail to meet your standards for good work and good grades (which are too high anyway!), you actually lessen your chances of succeeding well in that course. Because you won't try.

   Solution: You've got to believe in yourself. How? (1) Find someone who believes in you and who will tell you so. Go to the person often for support. (2) Remind yourself of the laws of learning in psychology. Almost anyone can learn anything if given enough time. (3) Increase your skill in studying. Read more of these lessons on studying. (4) When doubts creep in, talk to yourself. Say, "Nonsense. I'm normal. If I work, I can learn." Say it over and over and over. Why? Because it's true. It is true. You can. And you know it deep down.

HOW TO RELAX SO YOU CAN STUDY BETTER

This page tells you how you can relax yourself and give yourself mental suggestions. After you do these things and get used to them, your power of concentration and your memory and your ability to learn new things will increase.

THE BASIC METHOD FOR RELAXING*

1. Make yourself comfortable. Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair.
2. Think over an experience in which you have achieved extreme relaxation. For example, you may have spent a quiet afternoon on a beach, or fallen asleep by the fireplace after a walk in the snow, or rested quietly in deep shade on a riverbank. Do this for several seconds to half a minute.
3. Close your eyes and think of your favorite passive color. Try to visualize it. Greens and blues work best for many people.
4. After a few seconds, take three deep breaths. Hold the third, the deepest, and mentally visualize the color three times.
5. Let out the breath and go limp. Relax. Don't move a muscle. Simply stay relaxed and count backwards in your mind from fifty to zero; very slowly. (This part is dull. It's supposed to be.) At zero, count forward from one to three. Open your eyes.
6. If you wish to put some suggestions in your mind, change the last step slightly. When you have counted down to zero, quietly tell yourself the things you have decided to do and the thoughts you want to believe. It works best when you vividly imagine yourself to be successfully doing the things you are suggesting. After repeating those suggestions, count forward to three and open your eyes. Go to work.

Here are some possible things to suggest to yourself.

"I have decided to study this assignment fully."
"I am very interested in this subject matter."
"This subject matter is very relevant and important to me."
"I will find the important knowledge and ideas very easily."
"I will remember what is important."
"My memory is strong and reliable. I remember things easily."
"I will feel calm, relaxed and confident during this test."

SOME GUIDELINES FOR USING RELAXATION AND SUGGESTION

1. Make up your mind that you are not going to concentrate fiercely and intently on the exercises while you practice them. If you do, how can you relax?
2. Be passive. Melt mentally. Give your imagination free rein. Suggestion and imagination work hand in hand, so let yourself open up the widest mental plain.
3. It is important to practice this routine repeatedly. During the first two weeks, it will be good to practice it three times a day, for about five minutes each time. After you have done it several times, you will get better at it.
4. Depending on your ability to relax easily, it might be wiser to delay giving yourself suggestions until after you have practiced the exercises for about two weeks. But this is not definite. Use your own best judgment.
5. These methods do work! Thousands of people have found that relaxing and giving themselves positive suggestions free up their energies remarkably. Give it a try!

* Most of these ideas are taken from Kreskin, The Amazing World of Kreskin. New York: Random House, 1973, pp. 133-135

HOW TO TEACH YOURSELF NEW THINGS: THE "MISTARS" METHOD

INTRODUCTION: Can you imagine how good it would be to know exactly what to do in order to teach yourself something new? Wouldn't it be nice to stop using bad methods of learning things? This Study Tip contains an effective method.

THE MAIN IDEA--"MISTARS": The word "MISTARS" (pronounced my stars) contains the first letters of the key points. Here it is: Try to develop Mental Images from your Self and from Teachers about your right Actions that lead to Results that match the Standards.

You will build two kinds of mental images.

First, you observe teachers and build mental images of their actions and their good results that match the standards. Then you practice the action, copying the teacher. You start with a small, simple, slow part of the action that you can learn to do somewhat successfully (at a slow rate) after practicing. Practice it.

Second, when you begin to get some success, you observe what this success feels like and build the second mental image of your own right action. Using both images--the image of your teacher's action and standards and the image of your own inner feeling of right action--you practice in order to build up your speed, accuracy, longer sequences of action, and greater complexity. Good clear images will speed up your learning a lot!

ELEVEN LEARNING STEPS: After you read these eleven learning steps and the example on the next page, I recommend that you study them and practice using them on a simple learning task that you can find to do.

1. OBSERVE A TEACHER. If it is possible, watch a teacher or expert do the skill. Or read a book with instructions. Look for three things: Watch how the teacher's (1) actions lead to (2) results that match (3) the standards for good results.

Examples:
(a) A carpenter's actions of using tools produce the result of a finished cabinet that matches the standards for good cabinets.
(b) A good auto driver's actions of steering and using foot pedals produce the result of safe driving that matches legal and safety standards.
(c) A person wrote (action) a sociology textbook. His result was descriptions of information that matched the standards for good descriptions.
(d) A student's actions of trying to remember and state some facts from a sociology textbook led to the result of saying the facts in a way that matched the way the book's author stated the facts--the standard.

2. BUILD MENTAL IMAGES. Use your observations of the teacher or expert to build clear mental images of (1) the correct actions and (2) the standards for good results. You may take notes, use written manuals, pictures, videotapes, memory tricks or anything else that is helpful. Don't skip forming images of the standards. The purpose of learning the standards is so that you can identify good and bad results by yourself, without depending always on a teacher, and so you can know when to correct your actions.

3. BEGIN SIMPLY AND SLOWLY. If your learning task permits you, choose a part of the action that permits you to learn it fairly well in a short time. Normally, you will choose a short and simple part of the action and practice it slowly.

4. THINK BEFORE YOU ACT. Before you practice your action, let your images run through your mind of how to do the action correctly and of the standards for good results that you want to achieve. The purpose? The mental images will guide you to do better.

5. PRACTICE THE ACTION. Try to practice in such a way that you can produce a result that matches the standard. You are a beginner. Don't expect perfection. Go slowly on a small part of the action. Try to do it right in simple, slow way.

6. COMPARE YOUR RESULT TO THE STANDARD. Use your eyes or ears and your mind to detect the result you produced. Compare it to your image of the standard for good results. You should decide what ways your result matched the standard and what other ways it differed.

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7. BUILD A MENTAL IMAGE OF YOUR RIGHT ACTION. If you got the action partly right, then think about the image you remember of yourself doing the action correctly. This new image is a different one from your image of observing a teacher acting correctly. It is your own image of yourself acting successfully. Notice it. Remember it. The purpose? You will use it to guide your future actions into being correct, too. You will now have an inner feel for what's right and wrong and can correct errors before they start. So let yourself remember what success felt like.

8. CORRECT ANY MISTAKES. If your action caused bad results that do not match the standards for good results, try to analyze how to change your action next time so you can do it correctly. Normally, you will only change your action so it better fits your correct image of what to do. But sometimes you will find you had mistakenly learned a faulty image of what to do. If so, fix up your image of what a correct action is.

9. PRACTICE TO BUILD UP SPEED AND ACCURACY. Once you have begun to act more or less correctly, practice to build up your speed, to lessen mistakes, to do the action in a complex way, and to do it a variety of circumstances. Try to get it automatic and easy. However, go on to Step #10 and learn other parts while practicing the first part.

10. ADD MORE PARTS OF THE ACTION. Begin to practice other parts of the action using the same method. As they get better, integrate them and practice them together.

11. DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU MEET YOUR OWN STANDARDS. How do you know when to quit? It depends on your standards. If you have low standards, you'll quit soon. If you have high ones, you'll work longer. Practice until you can do the whole action and produce results that match your standard for good results. (In real life when you have lots of demands on you and not enough time, you will have to quit sooner.)

AN EXAMPLE: Please study this example and look back and forth from the example to the steps listed above until you feel you understand the steps.

A man decided to learn to play the cowboy song, "Home on the Range," on the piano. He had heard it played and sung before, so he knew the melody. (Steps #1 and #2.)

Unfortunately, he had never watched a good piano player do the fingering, so he had to figure it out by himself. (Step #1 is partly missing.)

He chose one short phrase of the soprano part of the right hand to practice. (Step #3.)

He hummed the melody before starting. (Part of Step #4.)

He played the phrase slowly, compared his clumsy results to the real melody, noticed successes and mistakes, corrected mistakes and repeated practicing. (Steps #5-8.)

When he began to get the melody right, he concentrated on remembering how his hands and fingers felt. (Step #7. Notice the image is of how the muscles felt.)

He practiced that phrase to build up his speed and to eliminate the few mistakes that remained. His image helped by giving him a clear signal when he does right or wrong. (Step #9.)

He practiced other sections of the soprano part, then the alto, tenor and bass parts. He added them to the other parts until he could play the whole song. (Steps #10 and #11 and other steps.)

WHY DOES THIS METHOD WORK? One thing that slows down most people when they try to learn something is that they do not have a way to tell when their actions were right or wrong. Another problem is that they do not have a way to tell in advance of acting whether they are going to act correctly or make a mistake. This method solves those problems, because you develop mental images of experts, you use feedback by comparing your results to the standards, and you develop mental images of how you did it when you acted successfully.

The key lies in your thinking. Develop mental images and use them. MISTARS!

December 1981

Daniel L. Hodges
LCC Testing Office

WHAT MOST INSTRUCTORS EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO DO

PRINCIPLE: This guide is based on the principle that: "If a person clearly understands what other people expect her or him to do, then the person is likely to adjust her or his behavior to them so as to get the most rewards and to avoid the most troubles.." Note: You don't have to do all things that teachers expect. It just helps to know what they expect.

1. STUDENT FREEDOM
   (a) Most college instructors consider their students to be adults--free and independent. (But some instructors are still exceptions and are like old-fashioned authoritarian teachers.)
   (b) Most instructors know that most of their students freely chose to come to college and to take courses. They know they cannot force or compel their students to do things. They know that students have the right to quit whenever they want to, and most of them accept that freedom. This is not like high school or the army.
   (c) Because of student freedom, many instructors will not interfere if students start making choices that are bad for their education. You will have a lot of freedom to get into trouble. For example, if you started cutting classes often, didn't hand in assignments, and missed a test or two, most instructors would not try to change your behavior. Most of them would assume you are a free adult and responsible for your own actions.
   (d) We recommend that you ask your instructor how he or she responds to late or missing tests.
   (e) We recommend that you take a lot of responsibility for your own school work. Be sure to do things right. Because if you don't, there may be nobody to come after you.
   (f) If you do have to hand in work late or ask to make up a test, it is okay in most cases. Many instructors will accept late work if the student explains the reasons for it and is courteous.

2. INSTRUCTORS EXPECT STUDENTS TO ASK QUESTIONS IN CLASS
   (a) Most instructors expect students to ask questions about things they do not understand. If students keep silent, what does an instructor assume? Either that he/she was perfectly clear or that the students are bored and do not care.
   (b) Many students are nervous about asking a question in class. They are afraid of asking a so-called "stupid question." They are afraid of irritating the teacher by interrupting the presentation. The oldest excuse is, "I thought I was the only one who didn't understand and I didn't want to slow down the class." (One day I had six people wait until after class to ask the same question and all had the same excuse!)
   (c) You should ask your questions when they occur to you. Why? First, it helps you. Second, it helps the other class members who often have the same question. Third, it helps the teacher know how clearly he/she is explaining the ideas.
   (d) The only thing you should not do is to ask so many questions and talk about so many things that you use too much of the teacher's time and prevent other students from talking too. When you talk, stay on the subject. However, apart from these warnings, you should talk in class. After all, you are paying good money to buy this knowledge and these skills! So insist on getting your money's worth!

3. MOST INSTRUCTORS EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO VISIT THEM IN THEIR OFFICES TO DISCUSS THEIR PROBLEMS IN UNDERSTANDING THE MATERIAL IN THE COURSE.
   If you have difficulty understanding certain ideas and if it's not a short question you can ask in class, you should visit the instructor in his/her office. It is perfectly right and proper to do so. Most instructors welcome it.

4. INSTRUCTORS EXPECT STUDENTS TO TAKE NOTES ON THEIR LECTURES.
   (a) Instructors usually expect students to learn important things that are talked about during class periods. They will ask questions on tests about ideas they presented in class. So buy a notebook and take moderately detailed notes.

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(b) Most students are fooled by the fact that they often understand a teacher's ideas perfectly. So they figure they don't need to take notes on them. But thirty minutes later they can hardly remember three specific details about the lecture. NOTE WELL: The human brain (<u>your</u> brain) does NOT automatically remember everything you understand. Understanding does not cause memory. So take notes!

(c) What should you take notes on? Always try to figure out what is important. It varies from teacher to teacher. Look for principles, vital facts, the main ideas, information that accomplishes the teacher's objectives, and things that are likely to show up on exams. Since a teacher's examples are not so important, just jot down a word or two to remind you. If a teacher gives a point that you understand and then tries to explain the meaning some more, just write down the main point, but don't take notes on the explanation unless you need it.

5. <u>TEACHERS EXPECT STUDENTS TO DO THEIR HOMEWORK AND READING ASSIGNMENTS ON TIME</u>.

(a) A teacher's whole plan of teaching usually depends on assuming that almost all the students are up-to-date with their reading. If they are, the teacher can talk about new ideas knowing that the students have read the necessary background. This is so important. It helps the teacher so much.

(b) Many teachers give out an outline of the course with the assignments on it during the first class period. They will assume you read the outline and they won't remind the class of the assignments. If your teacher acts this way, don't get fooled and fall behind. Check the outline and do your reading.

(c) As far as homework goes, teachers are busy people. It helps them if homework is done on time and tests taken on time. Very often it is harder to grade late work because the teacher has to review the key ideas and the standards for grading. It takes longer and adds extra hours.

6. <u>TEACHERS EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO ACTIVELY TRY TO LEARN</u>.

(a) Here is what a person does who learns actively:
  (i) The person wants to learn, asks mental questions, searches for information that will answer the questions.
  (ii) The person tries to understand new ideas, practices new skills, tries to think about the connections among three or four new ideas.
  (iii) The person actively tries to memorize important principles and information.
  (iv) The person tries to use the new skills and knowledge, tries to apply them to real life situations.

(b) But a person who learns passively expects the teacher to pound in the new knowledge and expects he/she can relax and listen. For example, one teacher had a middle-aged man in class who had worked in a factory most of his life. He ran a machine. He was able to let his mind wander and just to go through the motions without paying attention to his work. He expected in college to do the same thing. He expected that the teacher would somehow do something TO him that would magically make him learn. So he sat back, detached his mind, didn't try and didn't think. But the alert teacher noticed and told him that people cannot learn without being mentally involved. He changed his behavior and learned very rapidly after that.

(c) If you would like to become an active learner, we suggest that you read more of these guides to studying and follow many of their suggestions.

7. <u>TEACHERS EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO DO SOME WORK OUTSIDE OF CLASS</u>.

(a) Many teachers deliberately plan their courses so that students will do most of their reading and learning outside of class. Of course, teachers vary. But you should NOT plan to try to get through most courses by simply going to classes and skipping the rest of the assignments.

(b) You should plan on doing a few hours reading each week for each course that has reading assignments. And you should plan on extra time if the teacher requires written papers or gives homework. Finally, you should allow for a couple hours of time or more to review for each test.

Lane Community College Testing Office
January 1980

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING

1. Ask yourself, "Is it important to understand it?" If YES, then stop and try to figure it out. If NO, read on.
   a. How can you tell if it's important?
      (1) If it is one of the things your teacher wants you to learn.
      (2) If it is a general principle or information that is needed to understand later information.

2. There are no easy ways to understand. They all involve more work than simply reading past the troublesome part. Accept the fact that you must work harder to understand puzzling parts. Steps 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the most useful.

3. When a writer gives examples of concepts and ideas, study them carefully. Do not skip over examples. Also study things that the author says are not examples of a concept. For example, if an author were teaching the concept "mammal", he or she would give examples of mammals like dogs, cows, kangaroos, and humans. The author would also list some things we might confuse with mammals but which are not mammals--flies, maple trees, snakes. When you study examples, you should look for those features of the examples which match up with the concepts and principles the author is teaching. Consciously talk to yourself. Say, "This part of the example is an example of this concept."

4. When you read along and find a few lines you do not understand, do NOT stop immediately. Instead, read ahead a few sentences. And go back a few sentences before the puzzling part and read them. Sometimes the material before and after the puzzling part will explain it.

5. Go slowly! Read again the puzzling part word for word. Do it slowly, giving yourself time to think of the meanings of all the words.

6. Talk to yourself. This is important. Most people who are highly intelligent do this. Say, "This word means _____." This part of the sentence means _____." And then, where I have left blanks, you say the meaning in different words. Do not just stare at the words and sentences without thinking. Do not let your mind be wordless. Try to restate the passage in your own words. Think it through. Relate it to things meaningful to you. If you are alone, talk out loud. Really! I know people who do it.

7. If there are important words you do not know, stop reading and look them up in the dictionary. If the words are technical words in that course, look them up in the book's glossary (a miniature dictionary in the book itself, usually at the end). If that does not work, look in the index in the back of the book to find the word, find the pages where the word is discussed, and then read those pages. It will usually help.

8. Go back to the beginning of the relevant section. Why? Because authors use the beginning of passages to define basic words and to give basic information. Then they build their explanations step by step. If you can understand the beginning, it is easier to understand the middle. If the part you are reading depends on something much earlier in the book, turn back to it and read it.

9. Use the technique of breaking the puzzling passage down into several parts. It might have several steps or several characteristics of an object. Isolate them, and if possible, take a pencil and mark 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. in the margin of the book. Or write them down on a piece of paper.

   These separate parts will be related to other facts and ideas in the sections of the chapter. Pick one part and compare it to another part. Ask yourself how they are related. After you get one relationship answered, work on another. After you figure out several parts' relationships, the mystery will vanish.

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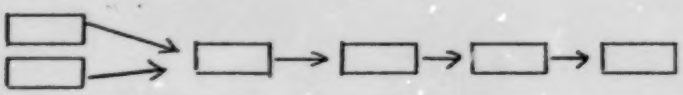
9. (continued)

There are several types of common relationships. (See Study Tip #3 on Categories.)

Cause and effect
Specific example and general category
Whole and its parts
Object and characteristics

Look for some of these relationships on purpose if a passage puzzles you.

10. Sometimes it's helpful to draw diagrams. Diagrams use a different part of your brain than reading words does; they can increase understanding. For cause and effect, make boxes and draw arrows between them.



For the parts of a whole thing, draw a crude picture and mark the parts.

11. If you are still puzzled, it is possible that you can solve the mystery later. So you should mark the page with a big question mark ? and return to it later. It is dangerous to pass over your unanswered questions without marking them because you may lose your place and leave an important gap in your knowledge.

12. Obviously, you can ask people who might know: Teachers, fellow students, intelligent friends.

13. Try to get the overall framework. This means figure out the author's purpose. Perhaps the author is listing four steps, six parts of something, explaining the effects of something. If you know the framework, it helps.

14. Figure out the parts you do understand. Then try to see how the part you don't understand can fit in.

15. If you can work your way towards making a guess (a hypothesis) about the meaning of the puzzling part, make a guess. Keep the guess in mind and reread the puzzling part as if the guess were true. Does it make sense now? If not, try to make a second guess and reread it. Make a third guess.

16. If you try and still cannot understand, it is possible that it is the writer's fault. Some writers write poorly. Some writers simply make mistakes. In such cases, the reader has no chance. If you think it's the author's fault, mark the passage with a question mark, read on, and ask your teacher about it later.

17. If you continue to have a lot of difficulty with a book, it is possible it is just too hard for you at this time. Try to take a course that covers some of the prerequisite knowledge for this course. Later after you build up the skills needed, you will find the same book clearer.

Another thing you can do is to accept the fact that you don't understand a lot and stay in the course. In some ways it is better to understand one-half of a good book than to understand nine-tenths of a bad book. Also if you work hard on a difficult book, it will raise your ability. Then you will understand the next difficult book better.

L.C.C. Testing Office
April, 1980

HOW TO TAKE OBJECTIVE TESTS TO GET THE HIGHEST SCORE POSSIBLE.

(TRUE-FALSE, MULTIPLE CHOICE, MATCHING, FILL-IN-THE-BLANK)

1. Study! People who know their subject are able to get much higher scores on tests than people who are good at test-taking but who do not know the subject. If you know your teacher's objectives for learning, study those things the hardest. Study specific things. Try to memorize knowledge.

2. Read precisely and get the exact meaning of words. (This is the most important advice.)

   a. Read slowly enough that you understand the meaning of everything your present degree of knowledge allows you to understand.
   b. Read directions carefully so that you understand them exactly. Do not skip the directions. Do not skip the instructions. Follow the directions!
   c. As you read the test items and the answer options, think of their meanings. Talk to yourself. Restate the meanings of the words. Compare the answer options mentally.
   d. DO NOT let your worry trick you into reading too fast. Do not skip over confusing phrases. Do not skim over questions hastily.

3. Read all of the answer options before you choose one.

   Why? Because you might choose the first right-sounding answer and not read far enough to see another one that is even more right-sounding.

4. How to handle a time limit.

   a. Check the time and the number of questions. Figure out how many questions you have to answer each minute in order to finish. Try to work at that rate.
   b. Work on the questions that are fairly easy first.
   c. Mark the ones you have not answered and do them later.
   d. If you have time left at the end, read over the test again and check your work. If you want to change an answer, you should do it. Scientific research proves that people who feel an answer is wrong and who believe they should change it are more often right than wrong. First is not always best.
   e. If some questions are worth more points, you might do them first.

5. How to handle questions that you do not know the answers to.

   a. Eliminate answer options that you are sure are wrong. Choose one of the remaining ones.
   b. If two answer options say the same thing in different words, it means they both have to be wrong. (Unless it is possible to choose two correct answers.)
   c. If two answer options directly contradict each other, you know one has to be wrong. Possibly both are wrong. Use that as a clue.
   d. Use key words as clues. ALL, ALWAYS, EVERY, NECESSARY, MUST, NEVER, NONE, ONLY, EXCEPT, MAY, OFTEN, GENERALLY, SOMETIMES, SELDOM, PERHAPS. When you see words like all, always, never, etc., remember that they are very strong words. There might be exceptions. It is possible, though it is not certain, that an answer option with a word like that will be wrong. On the other hand, words like generally and perhaps cover a lot of ground and may be right. But be careful! Most teachers know that students know about those words. They might try to trick you.

6. Should you guess when you are not sure? YES.

   Why? Because if there are five possible answer options, you have a one-in-five chance of getting it right. If you do not guess, you have a zero-in-five chance of getting it right.

   If the directions say there is a penalty for guessing, you should usually still guess. It will usually improve your score. Why? Because all they do is subtract a certain percentage of wrong answers, and you might be right. The worst that usually happens is that you will come out even. So guess.

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7. How to remember an answer you have read once, but forgotten.

a. Suppose you read a test question. You know you learned it once, but you cannot remember it now. You may be able to recall it.
b. Say to yourself, "What is the answer to this question?" (Then say the question to yourself.) "I know it, and I'm coming back later to get it."
c. Blink your eyes three times and go on to the next question.
d. When you later come back to the question, just look to see if the answer comes up as you think about it. It often does. Sometimes it will come back while you are working on another test question. If so, stop and return to the original questions as soon as you can.
e. Why does this method work? Everything you ever learned is in your mind somewhere. Your brain is an obedient servant to you. If you ask it to supply you with information, something happens inside to cause a search for the information. And if you wait and relax, your brain will often supply it for you.

8. How to cope with tiredness, nervousness, pain, and other stresses.

a. If people try hard, most people can do almost as well on tests when they are under stress as when they are relaxed and feeling fit. So don't worry too much about your score being much lower as long as you can make yourself concentrate and think.
b. It takes great extremes of pain, fear, tiredness and stress to cause much lowering of people's performance.
c. If you can tell yourself to concentrate and to think, you can succeed even if you happen to be under stress. So try to concentrate and think!

9. Handle mechanical details carefully.

a. Mark answers carefully. Don't accidentally mark the wrong answer.
b. If your teacher has you answer on an answer sheet that will be scored by an automatic scoring machine, make your marks heavy and dark. Do not let them stray out of the space for them. If you have to change an answer, follow the directions on the answer sheet.

10. What to do if you think the teacher has made a mistake.

a. If the teacher permits questions during the test, you should ASK!
b. Suppose you think two answers are right or no answer is right. Or suppose the wording of an answer option is not clear. Then write a note to the teacher if it is possible. (Do not write on a machine-scored answer sheet.) You should explain your thinking. Explain why you chose the answer you did, what it meant to you. Explain why you rejected another answer that may be obvious on the surface, but wrong deeper down. If you do this, your teacher may give you part credit even if you are partly wrong.
c. When the teacher returns the test and reports the correct answers, it is all right to respectfully ask why the teacher thinks an answer is correct. Don't be hostile. An honest teacher can either explain it or will admit a mistake. If you seriously believe your teacher has penalized you unfairly and will not change, then consult your school's Student Bill of Rights and protest.

11. You can get more help on test-taking methods.

a. Go to the Study Skills Department.
b. Read the book, Test Wiseness: Test-Taking Skills for Adults. (In the L.C.C. library and the bookstore in paperback.)
c. Consult Joyce Duchesneau in the Math Department -- especially for cases of test anxiety.

12. Summary: The most important thing is to read the test carefully. Be sure to tell yourself to understand the meanings of the words and sentences you read. Ask yourself, "What does this mean?" Then state the answer. Talk to yourself. Do anything that will help you focus on all the details you need to.

L.C.C. Testing Office
May 1980

STUDY TIP No. 12

PERSONAL FAILURE, WORRY, AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Purpose: The purpose of this Study Tip is to describe a false belief that most people have. It makes their worrying worse than it needs to be. If you have this belief and correct it, you will worry less in college and probably will do better in your courses.

The False Belief: "There is something permanently wrong with me."

Let me speak personally to you. From the time I was very young I was convinced that I was very different from other people. I believed there was something wrong with me. There were several things I could not do as well as other people could--I was shy, I could not talk easily and sociably with people, I wasn't good at sports, and I was not very good looking. I also noticed that I wanted some things that were wrong, and I was bad sometimes in my teachers' eyes and in my parents' eyes. Because of these inadequacies and others, I just concluded I wasn't made right.

I hope you will read carefully and will think about what I mean in a way deeper than the words I use. I find it hard to express this idea in words.

I believed that there was something different about me. I thought I was just an inadequate person in some deep and permanent ways. I never truly just thought, "I am a person. In some ways I am superior to some people, and in some other ways I am inferior to some people. But always we are all people together, not better, not worse."

When I grew up, I discovered that many people, perhaps most people, have the same belief deep down inside them, too. I now know that many people are like me in that they have the same irrational negative belief that they are just a "wrong person" or an "inadequate person."

The Bad Effects:

It makes worry a lot worse when you believe there is something not right about you. If you think that a failure in a class or a test just proves that you are a dummy and really inferior and not as good a person as others, then it really really hurts!

But suppose you did not believe you were basically inferior. Then when you happened to make a bad mistake, you would say to yourself, "That's okay. Mistakes are natural. I'll try again and sooner or later I'll improve."

In school or college there are many natural situations that involve making mistakes, being criticized by teachers, being slow to learn, getting low grades, trying to learn and having trouble, and so on. School is just that way. It's just natural. The purpose of school is for you to take courses in which you are somewhat ignorant of the subject and to learn. It is not possible to have success all the time.

Some natural failures and mistakes are caused by teachers and textbooks and normal school problems. Other natural failures and mistakes are caused by our own foolish and careless behavior. Both of these causes of failure can make us worry. And if we deeply believe that failures and mistakes prove we are personal failures as human beings, it makes us worry more.

But I can prove to you that there are natural causes of mistakes and that mistakes and failures and problems in school do not prove that you are a deeply inadequate person. Read the list on the other side of this paper and see how normal it is to make many mistakes in college. Since it's normal, you can accept mistakes and grin and keep working and watch yourself learn and grow and improve.

OVER →

Study Tip No. 12

When Normal School Situations Cause Worry:

1. When people try to learn new subjects, there are many ways in which "failures" and embarrassments can occur. People make natural mistakes on homework; they give wrong answers to teachers' questions in class, they miss some questions on tests, and they get some low grades. They do some things right, but the teacher never notices. Sometimes they ask questions that look stupid to other people. Often they watch the other students learn faster and better than themselves. All these things cause natural worrying.

2. Some teachers require that the students do a lot of work. They make the course hard. Hard courses make the students have more trouble and make more mistakes. And the possibility of mistakes encourages people to worry.

3. Some teachers are negative and critical of students who make normal mistakes. They are not relaxed and matter-of-fact about mistakes. It can be very embarrassing to be criticized, especially if the teacher does it in front of the class. That causes natural anxiety.

4. Sometimes teachers set up the rules for their courses so that every failure is an important failure. It has big consequences. For example, a teacher might give two big tests and not ten little tests. Each low grade is quite important. Or a teacher might not permit make-up exams and extra-credit papers. It tends to cause a very natural worry.

5. If a teacher is not an effective teacher and if the textbook is poorly written, it is hard for the students to learn easily. This situation makes them anxious.

When the Students' Own Behavior Causes Worry:

1. If a student delays studying until the last minute and studies carelessly and refuses to try hard, it has two bad effects.

a. The student will know that it isn't possible to get very high grades on projects and homework and exams. That will cause worrying.

b. The student will also feel guilty. And it is very unpleasant for people to know they have deliberately done something bad--like study carelessly. So people worry about the fact that they are going to study carelessly and make themselves have a guilty conscience.

2. If a student does not know about good methods of studying effectively, then the person's studying is likely to take a long time. It is likely the person will not learn very much and will make many mistakes. So more anxiety.

3. If a student wants to be practically perfect and to make no mistakes, then any natural mistakes will hurt worse than if the person started out with more reasonable standards. People with high standards tend to worry more about failure.

4. Some people just do not think it is possible to ask for help from their teachers or counselors or fellow students. So they feel helpless and isolated. And when they have natural problems, they feel there's no way to escape from failing. Naturally, they worry about it.

Conclusions:

Do you see now why problems are so natural in school and college? Do you see now that the normal problems of college do NOT prove that there is something personally wrong about you? We are all in this together. Even if sometimes you cause most of your own problems, you can change.

Best wishes.

By Dan Hodges, L.C.C. Testing Office
May 1980

HOW TO PLAN YOUR TIME SO THAT YOU CAN GET YOUR HOMEWORK DONE

1. Most people's problems with time are really decision problems.

   Is your time problem really a result of your choices? Many people have put a low priority on their school work. When they have free time, they do non-school activities that have high importance to them. Yet they notice that they cannot get their work done and that they have to work hard at the last minute. They complain they didn't have enough time! Wrong! They had put a low value on school work. They treated schoolwork as carelessly as any sensible person would treat an unimportant activity.

   **Suggestion: You should decide that it is very important to you to do your schoolwork--and you will automatically begin to "have more time for it."

2. Make a Daily "To Do" List

   Write down everything you need to do. Put both schoolwork and other activities on it.

   Then rate the importance of each item.

   Put "A" beside activities that are highly important.
   Put "B" beside activities that are somewhat important, but secondary in comparison to "A" activities.
   Put "C" beside activities that would be nice to do, but are not as important as the "A's" and "B's".
   Then throughout the day, work on only the "A" activities until they are done.

3. Put relaxing time on your "To Do" List

   a. It is important to give yourself time off to lead a balanced life, except possibly for brief periods of intense work.
   b. If you do not schedule relaxing times, you may end up hating work and rejecting it and plunging into all fun activities.

4. Analyze your large assignments into several parts and schedule time for each part. Start with the last part and work backwards.

   a. The purpose of this advice is to help you avoid putting off an assignment too long and then, in panic, finding out you don't have time enough to finish it. Taking fifteen minutes to plan can save you hours of confusion.

   b. You need three kinds of information.
      1. What are all the steps you need to go through to finish the assignment?
      2. How long will each step take?
      3. What day and time does each step need to be done in order to have enough time to do the steps that come afterward?

   c. For example, suppose you are writing a short paper. The steps are: read the assignment, take notes, think about it, write an outline, write a first draft, write the final draft. If the paper is due Monday, ask yourself when you need to start writing the final draft in order to have time to be done. Next ask yourself when you should write the first draft in order to have time to write the final draft. And so on. Work backwards until you can figure out when to do your reading.

   d. Take into account other blocks of time you have to spend on other assignments and on non-school activities.

5. At the beginning of each school term, plan your schedule so that you know you will have enough time to do your course work.

   a. Students who carry a course load of 12 credits will usually have between 10 and 30 hours of work outside of class each week.
   b. Add together the hours spent in class, the hours spent doing homework, and the time for all the non-school activities. Do you have enough time? A week has 168 hours.

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6. When short periods of free time become available, you should work on short parts of longer assignments.
   a. Read three pages while waiting for the bus. Write one paragraph for an English paper while waiting for a TV program to start. And so on.
   b. DO NOT delay doing your school work until you have long blocks of time available. You will waste lots of valuable time.
   c. Can your mind handle broken-up periods of work? Yes. Give yourself a one-minute review when you start.
7. Learn to say "NO" to people who try to interrupt you.
   a. When people suggest that you do something with them, they do not usually realize how important it is to do homework. But if you explain it to them and promise them a little time later, they will usually accept it.
   b. You will have to pay a price in order to manage your time successfully. The price comes in other people's dissatisfaction with you and in your own dissatisfaction - when you stop doing certain things you like. Do you want to pay that price? Only you can decide.
8. The "work first" rule. (only for people who hate time planning).
   a. Some successful students do not schedule their time at all. How do they do it? They almost always put work ahead of everything else.
   b. The rule: If you have schoolwork waiting to be done, always do it ahead of anything else that is less necessary.
   c. Don't be silly about this rule. Of course, you can eat, sleep, and mow the lawn on Saturday.
   d. People who follow this rule never put things off. They start on new assignments immediately. Frequently, they get their work all done and they have free time that they can use without feeling guilty.
9. Do your most difficult school work during your best time of day.
   a. If you are a "night person", then night is when to write your papers and to read the deep books. Do routine math problems some other time. If you are a "morning person", use morning for creative work and hard work.
   b. Do not do ordinary, routine homework during the time you are most alert. Do it other times.
10. How to start a big difficult project: Schedule a short "foot-wetter time."
    a. Many people can overcome the difficulty in starting big projects by doing easy parts of it that get them rolling. Once you start, it's easier to continue.
    b. Schedule a short work session: Ten minutes - fifteen - thirty.
    c. Do easy things like: get the books together, take out the typing paper, and the class notes. You can also find something in the middle of the project to do. You don't need to start at the logical beginning.
11. Get some help in managing your time.
    a. The Study Skills Department at L.C.C. offers help in planning time.
    b. Most counselors can help.
    c. You can read books on the subject. Two of the best are available in paperback editions. They are:
       (1) Alan Lakein, How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life
       (2) R. Alec Mackenzie, The Time Trap: How to Get More Done in Less Time.

L.C.C. Testing Office
June 1980

HOW STUDENTS SUCCEED IN COLLEGE---
DESPITE HAVING READING SKILLS THAT ARE BELOW AVERAGE

***Note: You can also listen to these facts on a cassette tape. It also has more advice.

Our research on students at LCC who have below-average skills in reading shows very clearly that almost all of them who sincerely try to succeed are able to get C averages or higher. This is a fact.

People's skills improve with practice. People's skills of understanding what they read and studying effectively get better and better as they use them. Therefore, most students who have succeeded planned their courses so that they had time -- time to practice reading and studying and time to grow. Later, when they could read and study better, they took harder courses and did well.

We have listed below the real methods used by real students who had low reading abilities when they entered college. Not all of the students used all of these methods. But they all used some of them.

1. These students took some easy courses at first. They did not take all hard courses. Some of them took courses that did not demand much reading.
2. They did not take many courses--often less than 12 credits.
3. They always took introductory courses before they took advanced courses.
4. They planned their time carefully to have plenty of time to do their homework. Since they were below-average readers, they knew they needed lots of time.
5. They attended almost all of their classes. They did not skip classes.
6. They took careful notes in classes and reviewed the notes before tests.
7. They read all of their assignments. They tried to do their work on time.
8. They studied before all tests.
9. They visited their teachers or student tutors when they had questions.
10. They learned how to study and how to really learn and remember. They read books on how to study, and some of them took Effective Learning, a course taught in the Study Skills Department.
11. They tried to take a few courses in which students got to talk together and in which the teachers and counselors could give them help and support. For example: Orientation to College, Human Relations, Career Development, and Assertiveness Training.
12. They took courses to improve their reading, writing, spelling, and math skills if necessary. For example: Reading 1, Reading 2, Basic English Grammar and Sentence Writing, Writing 120 and others.
13. Many of them had some difficulties in college--subjects that they could not understand at first and some low grades. It often required hard work. But they kept going! Later their grades went up.
14. They knew that their steady serious work would cause them to improve. They knew that their reading ability would improve as they exercised it, so they were patient during the first few weeks and months, which were the most difficult. Later they found work easier.
15. They got good advice from people who knew what life is like in a college--an LCC counselor, a teacher, a friend.

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NO. 15 STUDY TIP

WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE?
HOW CAN YOU RAISE YOUR OWN INTELLIGENCE?

Purpose: It is possible for people to do exercises that will increase their present level of intelligence. If you exercise your intelligence it will grow stronger, just as an athlete can grow stronger through physical exercise. This Study Tip will tell you what to do.

What is Intelligence? It involves two abilities. (1) Intelligence means that a person can see relationships between things. When given some particular examples, the person can think of general concepts and principles linking them. And when given general concepts and principles, the person can think of particular examples.

(2) Intelligence also means that a person can do the above things with abstractions. What are abstractions? They are ideas and concepts about things. They are not the sensations you get directly through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. If you feel a flat desk, you feel its flatness. A sensation. But to think to yourself, "It is flat," that's an abstraction. You can see five people. That's sensation. But to call them a family, that's an abstraction.

Some Examples of Intelligence:

(1) Here is a problem. "Name three ways a tree is like an ice cream cone." Here are some possible answers. (There are many others.) Both have weight, both are larger than an ant, both can come in different colors.

Did you notice that the answers involve relationships between a tree and an ice cream cone? The relationships were the three kinds of similarities in this case. Concerning abstractness, when you think that both the tree and the ice cream have weight, it's abstract, because you have thought of weight as a separate property that is common to both of them.

(2) Solve this analogy: "A cat is to a kitten as a butterfly is to _____ (fly, moth, caterpillar, mosquito)." The answer is caterpillar because it's a baby butterfly like a kitten is a baby cat. Notice that you have to think abstractly about relationships, general concepts, and specific examples.

How to Raise Your Intelligence:

(1) Take courses that require you to think. Try to do high quality work, of course. Courses that only give information or only teach a physical skill will not raise your intelligence much.

(2) Read a lot of books. Choose books that challenge your ability to understand them. Work at trying to understand them. But be sensible. Choose books that are within your present ability--not too hard, not too easy. Both fiction and non-fiction books help, even "junk fiction" like Westerns, spy novels, etc.
   a. When you read, think about what you read.
   b. Look up words you don't understand. Try to understand hard passages.

(3) Write a lot. Write descriptions of events that have happened to you and descriptions of things you have seen. Try to make the reader come close to understanding what you have experienced. Try to use the best words and the most descriptive sentences you can invent.
   a. Write a personal journal or diary. Write letters to friends. Write poems and stories and essays. Take a writing class and work!
   b. Keep doing it--day after day, week after week. You'll get better.
   c. Study other writers to learn how to do good writing yourself.
   d. Get intelligent criticism from other people. Use it to improve.

(4) Ask yourself questions. Develop the habit of asking questions about how the real world works and about the similarities and differences between things. Try to answer your questions. Try to test your answers by seeing if they are consistent with other information you have about the problem.

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(5) Do an exercise called "imaginative reading." Pick a poem or story or article that is moderately difficult. Get a dictionary. Then read one line. Now go through the important words and try to imagine what each one means. Talk to yourself or write down your thoughts. (Talking or writing helps clarify your thought. Very important!) Look for two things. (1) What each word means in the real world. (2) How each word relates to the rest of the sentence and to the rest of the paragraph, where it's relevant.

Read this example and see how to do these things on a line from a poem by Wordsworth.

"She wandered lonely as a cloud."

Notice that the person is female. The word "wandered" means walking in a path that has no goal and that changes direction from time to time. The word "lonely" means being alone and not liking it, wanting company. And it is "lonely as a cloud," not just lonely. "As" means similar to. What is lonely about a cloud? Can you make your mind see a cloud in the sky? Can you see it lonely? Can you imagine the woman or girl walking that way?

Some advice in doing imaginative reading:

a. Try hard to make your interpretations truthful. Check your work for accuracy.
b. It helps to read out loud and to talk out your thoughts. It also helps to write down your thoughts.
c. It is absolutely great to do it with someone else. Take turns. You read a line and interpret it. The other person reads a line and interprets. When each is done, the other person comments on things that were missed.
d. It goes extremely slowly. But don't worry about it. If you do it daily or several times a week for a period of time, it will increase your intelligence remarkably. Incidentally, it is fun. It is stimulating.

(6) Do mental exercises:

a. Object and categories. Think of an object and try to think of as many categories it will fit into as you can. Example: A puppy. Some categories are young things, mammals, dogs, pets, someone's possessions, living things.
b. Categories and specific examples. Think of a general category and try to think of as many specific examples of it as you can. Example: Buildings is the category. Some specific examples of buildings are the LCC Center Building, my white house, the Washington Monument, a mud hut, an igloo.
c. Object and its parts. Example: A table. It is a top, four legs, braces, plastic covering, molecules, atoms.
d. Object and its characteristics. Example: A table. It is colored green and gray, it is heavy, it is smooth, it is cool, it is three feet by three feet in dimensions, it is square in shape, etc.
e. A cause and its effects. Example: The eruption of Mt. St. Helens. It lowered the mountain's height, dropped ash on cities, killed people, made interesting news, aroused fear, led to President Carter's visit, etc.
f. An effect and its causes. Example: A piece of chalk dropped to the floor. It was caused by a person who let go of it, the law of gravity worked, no one grabbed it in time, the person decided to let it go, the person wanted to hear it hit.

(7) Take courses and read books on improving thinking skills. Here are some recommendations.

a. A course called Thinking Skills--taught in Study Skills Department.
b. Three books: Creative Analysis, by Upton, Samson and Farmer; Problem Solving and Comprehension by Whimbey and Lochhead; How to Prepare for College Entrance Examinations by Barron's

(8) For all of these suggestions work on content that interests you. If you practice on examples from real estate, your intelligence will grow most rapidly in that area. If you practice on concepts from building construction, that's what your intelligence will grow most rapidly in. The thinking skills will make you most intelligent in the area you choose; but they will also increase your intelligence in other areas, too.

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ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges